

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W
-----201504Z 115723 /43

O P 201410Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1355
INFO USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KINSHASA 0522

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: SREF, PINS, CG, AO
SUBJECT: CABINDAN REFUGEES IN ZAIRE

REF: A) STATE 004243 B) KINSHASA 0024 C) KINSHASA 0065
D) KINSHASA 0126

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY HAS SECURED PERMISSION FROM OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENCY TO SEND OFFICIAL TO BAS ZAIRE TO EXAMINE REFUGEE SITUATION. CONTACTS WITH IRC REPRESENTATIVE HAVE REVEALED AN UNUSUAL AMOUNT CONCERN ON THE PART OF LOCAL UNHCR OFFICE CONCERNING IRC ACTIVITIES AND IT REPORT. EMBASSY SUGGESTS SENDING OF INDEPENDENT UNHCR INVESTIGATING TEAM TO DETERMINE EXTENT OF PROBLEM IN REFUGEE ASSISTANCE IN ZAIRE. END SUMMARY.

2. SINCE RECEIPT OF REFTEL A, EMBASSY HAS BEEN ATTEMPTING TO OBTAIN APPOINTMENT WITH BUKASSA, COUNSELOR IN CHARGE OF ANGOLAN REFUGEES, OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENCY, FOR PERMISSION TO SEND AN OFFICER TO EXAMINE REFUGEE SITUATION IN BAS ZAIRE AND NOTABLY TSHELA REGION. DURING THIS PERIOD, WE HAVE HAD ALMOST DAILY CONTACT WITH IRC REPRESENTATIVE ERJAVEC REGARDING HIS ACTIVITIES IN ZAIRE AND PROBLEMS HE HAS BEEN ENCOUNTERING, MOST OF WHICH STEM FROM LOCAL UNHCR. FOLLOWING IS REPORT ON SITUATION TO DATE:

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A) EMBASSY HAS NOW SEEN BUKASSA WHO HAS AGREED TO REQUEST FOR SENDING AID OFFICER TO BAS ZAIRE ACCOMPANIED BY GOZ OFFICIAL(S). PRESENT PLAN CALLS FOR TEAM TO DEPART FOR REGION MIDDLE OF NEXT WEEK PENDING FINAL ARRANGEMENTS WITH BUKASSA JANUARY 21.
B) IRC HAS, AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, BEEN VERY ACTIVE IN EXAMINING REFUGEE PROBLEM IN BAS ZAIRE. AT MOMENT IT IS CONCENTRATING ON TSHELA REGION WHERE IT FEELS NEED IS GREATEST. ERJAVEC

HAS NOW PLACED HIMSELF UNDER ECZ (EGLISE CHRETIENNE DU ZAIRE) UMBRELLA, A SEMI-OFFICIAL ZAIRIAN ORGANIZATION WHICH HAS BEEN WORKING WITH REFUGEES, AND IS PROVIDING LOCALLY BOUGHT FOOD DIRECTLY TO THIS GROUP. ECZ PREVIOUSLY HELPED IRC TO OBTAIN AUTHORIZATION TO VISIT BAS ZAIRE FOR SECOND SURVEY AND, ACCORDING TO ERJAVEC, THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENCY IS FULLY BEHIND IRC EFFORTS. HE IS NOW IN THE TSHELA REGION WITH AN ECZ REPRESENTATIVE, SUPERVISING THE DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT IRC HEADQUARTERS HAS AGREED TO HIS SETTING UP OPERATIONS IN ZAIRE AND HAS GRANTED HIM \$50,000 OVER A SIX MONTH PERIOD TO HELP CABINDAN REFUGEES. THIS MONEY WILL BE CHANNELLED TO THE ECZ.

C) ERJAVEC'S EFFORTS HAVE NOT BEEN WITHOUT COMPLICATIONS. SINCE IRC ARRIVAL, UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE ANTOINE NOEL, AN ETHIOPIAN OF SOMALI EXTRACTION, HAS BEEN HIGHLY DEFENSIVE AND ACTING LIKE A CAGED TIGER. WHILE HE WAS ON LEAVE DURING THE WEISNER/ERJAVEC VISIT, HIS ASSISTANTS, APPARENTLY ON HIS DIRECT ORDERS, GAVE THE IRC MINIMAL SUPPORT. SINCE HIS RETURN, NOEL HAS BEGUN TAKING ACTION TO UNDERMINE FURTHER IRC ACTIVITY. THIS ATTITUDE APPEARS TO BE BASED MAINLY ON THE FACT THAT HE DID NOT HAVE OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW (IE CLEAR) THE WEISNER/ERJAVEC REPORT (REFTEL B), BEFORE IT WAS SENT TO IRC HEADQUARTERS. (WE UNDERSTAND, HOWEVER, THAT NOEL'S STAFF HAD BEEN FULLY BRIEFED PRIOR TO HIS RETURN). NOEL HAS TAKEN THE POSITION THAT HE AND HIS OFFICE HAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE REFUGEE PROBLEMS IN ZAIRE AND THAT UNHCR IS IN FACT PROVIDING ADEQUATE RELIEF ASSISTANCE. AS A RESULT, HE CONTENDS THERE SHOULD BE A UNIFORMITY IN REPORTING BASED ON HIS OWN ASSESSMENTS AND HE SHOULD HAVE DIRECT CONTROL OVER ANY INDEPENDENT REFUGEE RELIEF EFFORT. (WE ARE UNCONFIDENTIAL

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AWARE IF HE IS ACTUALLY COORDINATING HIS OWN OPERATION WITH THE ECZ, THE MAIN ZAIRIAN ORGAN RESPONSIBLE FOR REFUGEE ASSISTANCE). HE OBVIOUSLY BELIEVES ANY ADVERSE REPORTING COULD CAUSE HIM PROBLEMS. HE HAS ALSO MAINTAINED THAT CONDITIONS IN SONGOLOLO, MOANDA AND TSHELA ARE SATISFACTORY DESPITE THE SURFACING OF REPORTS TO THE CONTRARY. (WE NOW UNDERSTAND AIDR HEAD IN MOANDA HAS RESIGNED AND RETURNED TO BELGIUM AND IS PREPARING FULL REPORT ON FAILURE TO DISTRIBUTE 400 TONS OF FOOD). NOEL HAS REFLECTED THESE VIEWS TO ERJAVEC IN ADDITION TO EXPRESSING HIS CONCERN OVER THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE IRC REPORT MAY BE SEEN BY SENATOR KENNEDY'S COMMITTEE. AT THE SAME TIME, NOEL HAS CONTACTED THE AMBASSADOR EXPRESSING SIMILAR VIEWS AND INTIMATING THAT ANY PUBLICIZING OF ANY ADVERSE IRC REPORTING WOULD HAVE TO BE MET WITH HIS STRONG REBUTTAL. ALSO, HE CHARGED IRC WITH PLANNING TO ASSIST REFUGEES IN WAR ZONE ALONG CABINDAN-ZAIRIAN BORDER EVEN THOUGH HE HAD DECIDED NOT TO BECAUSE OF "POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS". (IN THIS CONNECTION HE NOTED HE WAS PREPARED TO HELP REFUGEES IF THEY WERE FIVE KMS FROM BORDER BUT, DESPITE REPORTS THAT THEY HAVE BEEN FOR LAST MONTH OR SO SOMZ 20 KMS INTO ZAIRE TERRITORY,

TO OUR KNOWLEDGE NO UNHCR AID HAS BEEN FORTHCOMING).

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KINSHASA 0522

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B) IN HIS EFFORTS TO COUNTER IRC OR AT LEAST BRING IT UNDER HIS CONTROL, NOEL HAS NOW APPARENTLY TAKEN HIS CASE TO GOZ. ON JANUARY 18, HEAD OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS, FONAFFS BUKETI, MADE "UNOFFICIAL" DEMARCHE TO POLCOUNS SEEKING CLARIFICATION REGARDING IRC ACTIVITIES. MANY OF POINTS RAISED WERE SIMILAR TO THOSE MADE BY NOEL TO AMBASSADOR AND ERJAVEC. IN ADDITION, BUKETI EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER REPORT OF POSSIBLE IRC INTENTION TO PLACE IN INTERNATIONAL PRESS PICTURES OF REFUGEES TAKEN BY ERJAVEC. POLCOUNS GAVE BACKGROUND ON IRC, ASSURING IT WAS RESPONSIBLE ORGANIZATION AND THAT PICTURES, AS FAR HE AWARE, WERE SOLELY INTENDED FOR INTERNAL USE OF IRC. ALTHOUGH SOMEWHAT MOLLIFIED, BUKETI NEVERTHELESS GAVE IMPRESSION MATTER COULD BE RAISED AGAIN.

3. EMBASSY HAS NO DOUBT NOEL WILL TRY TO KEEP QUESTION ALIVE IN GOVERNMENT CIRCLES UNTIL IT IS RESOLVED TO HIS SATISFACTION. HE STRIKES US AS A HIGHLY POLITICAL ANIMAL WHO, FEELING THREATENED, IS ALREADY SEEKING TO PROTECT HIS FLANKS. IN THIS RESPECT WE BELIEVE HE MAY BE INCLINED TO GO QUITE FAR, INCLUDING ATTEMPTING TO DRIVE WEDGE BETWEEN EMBASSY AND GOZ. AT SAME TIME, NOEL HAS MAINTAINED REFUGEES ARE NOT AS BAD OFF AS THE IRC CLAIMS. ACCORDING TO HIM, IT TAKES AN AFRICAN MIND TO UNDERSTAND THAT THEIR NEEDS ARE FEW. HE HAS SPOKEN LARGELY IN GENERALITIES CONCERNING UNHCR ACTIVITIES IN RESPONSE TO OUR SPECIFIC REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION. GENERALLY, HE HAS BEEN SINGULARLY UNHELPFUL
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DESPITE PROFESSED WILLINGNESS TO "COLLABORATE" WITH EVERYONE.
SUCH ACTION WOULD SUGGEST THERE IS CONSIDERABLE TRUTH IN REPORTS
WE ARE RECEIVING CONCERNING DEFICIENCIES IN THE LOCAL UNHCR'S
PERFORMANCE.

4. WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THESE REPORTS BUT WE WONDER WHETHER,
GIVEN SITUATION OUTLINED ABOVE, IT WOULD BE ADVISABLE FOR US TO
SEND SOMEONE TO BAS ZAIRE AS PLANNED IN PARA 2 (A) ABOVE.
EMBASSY BELIEVES WHAT IS NEEDED NOW IS FURTHER INVESTIGATION OF
THE PLIGHT OF THE REFUGEES AS WELL AS OF THE WAY IN WHICH UNHCR IS
HANDLING PROBLEM. WE RECOMMEND THAT UNHCR/GENEVA SEND A TEAM HERE
FOR THIS PURPOSE. WE COULD SEND SOMEONE WITH UNHCR/GENEVA TEAM
TO BAS ZAIRE, BUT TO GET OUT IN FRONT WOULD PREDICTABLY PUSH
MR. NOEL INTO ACCUSING US OF TRYING TO SANDBAG HIM. MISSION
GENEVA MAY WISH TO COMMENT ON FEASIBILITY UNHCR QUICKLY GEARING UP
FOR THIS IMMEDIATE NEED. PLEASE ADVISE.
CUTLER

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Message Attributes

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